

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 EB-11 COME-00 AGR-20 AID-20 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15 OMB-01 RSR-01 /136 W

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R 021050Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5313

INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS : EGEN, EAID, CB

SUBJECT : DOMESTIC RICE SITUATION

REF : BANGKOK 11766

1. IN RESPONSE TO GROWING SHORTAGES OF RICE AVAILABLE AT OFFICIALLY FIXED PRICE AT RETAIL LEVEL (REFTEL), THAI CABINET ON JULY 31 DIRECTED THAT ALL RICE MERCHANTS MUST DECLARE RICE STOCKS BY AUGUST 5 TO MINISTRY OF COMMERCE OR FACE PUNISHMENT UNDER ARTICLE 17 OF INTERIM CONSTITUTION THAT AUTHORIZES GOVERNMENT TO USE EXCEPTIONAL POWERS OF PUNISHMENT WITHOUT RECOURSE TO REGULAR COURTS, ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNTS. SAME SOURCES REPORT THAT CABINET HAS ALSO LIFTED BAN ON EXPORTS OF PARBOILED AND BROKEN RICE (OF WHICH THAILAND HAS A SURPLUS), SUBJECT TO THE REQUIREMENT THAT MERCHANTS MUST SELL TWO TONS OF FIVE OR TEN PERCENT BROKEN RICE TO MINISTRY OF COMMERCE FOR EACH TON EXPORTED OF THE TWO TYPES AUTHORIZED. END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. COMMERCE MINISTRY OFFICIAL AUGUST 1 CONFIRMED ABOVE ACTIONS TO EMBASSY OFFICER. ALSO EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN
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OVER LONG RANGE CONSEQUENCES ON GROUND THAT MERCHANTS

MIGHT VERY WELL REFUSE TO BUY THE NEXT CROP LEST THEY AGAIN, AS THEY CLAIM, BE FORCED TO SELL AT A LOSS. FROM THIS AND ANOTHER SOURCE WITHIN RTG, EMBASSY CONCLUDES THAT CABINET ACTION WAS STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY COL. NARONG KITTIKACHORN AS DEPUTY SECRETARY GENERAL OF BOARD OF INSPECTION AND FOLLOW-UP OF GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS (BIFGO), WHO HAS BEEN PUBLICLY CRITICAL OF COMMERCE DEPARTMENT'S HANDLING OF RICE PROBLEM AND HAS URGED A STERN POLICY TO FORCE MERCHANTS TO SELL THEIR RICE STOCKS RATHER THAN USE THE INDUCEMENT OF HIGHER PRICES AT THE RETAIL LEVEL. ASIDE FROM THE BLACKMARKETING OF RICE THAT HAS DEVELOPED IN RESPONSE TO THE PRICE FIXING AT A LEVEL UNACCEPTABLE TO MERCHANTS, ANOTHER UNDESIRABLE FEATURE IS THE ALLEGED INDUCEMENT TO SMUGGLING ACROSS THE BORDERS. HOWEVER, THE NEW EXPORT PROGRAM SHOULD PROVIDE A LEGITIMATE ALTERNATIVE TO RECOUP AT LEAST A PART OF THE LOSS ON DOMESTIC SALES.
UNGER

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